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OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

October 28, 1982

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Dear Cap:

I wanted to give you a quick initial reaction to your October 25 memorandum recommending that we approve the sale of Lance, MER-200 bomb racks and MLRS to Saudi Arabia. You are certainly correct that we must encourage a positive Saudi role in advancing our Middle Eastern policies. I believe, however, that such encouragement is best focused on our broad security and political policies toward the area. Maintaining our commitment to the peace process and to the speedy withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon, as well as our willingness to work with interested Arab governments towards these ends, are likely to be more important in achieving Saudi political support for our positions than providing them with the weapon systems mentioned in your memorandum.

To accomplish these objectives, we will also continue to need the widespread support which the President's policies now enjoy in Congress and the confidence of all the key parties in the region, in particular Israel. Moreover, a shift to a notably more liberal sales policy toward Saudi Arabia would, over time, erode the well-tested and longstanding basis of our supply relationship that we will provide frank and balanced advice on security assistance issues including a careful and independent review of perceived Saudi needs. Our present view, recently confirmed by Ambassador Murphy, is that the Saudi leadership is quite pleased with our security cooperation, which you have so carefully and successfully nurtured, and is not agitating for additional equipment at this time. It is inevitable that the Saudi "wish list" at any given moment will contain some items we cannot supply.

The Honorable
Caspar W. Weinberger,
Secretary of Defense.

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: MAR 08 2019

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With respect to the three systems addressed in your October 25 memorandum, I cannot agree that now is the time to approve these items for Saudi Arabia. It would be preferable for the time being to maintain the position on Lance and MLRS set forth in your recent letter to Prince Sultan. On the MER-200 bomb racks in particular, I am deeply concerned about the reaction a decision to sell would generate on the Hill and the consequent damage to US-Saudi relations of another bruising Congressional debate. Therefore, we should continue to discourage Saudi interest in the bomb racks.

I believe that a number of issues raised by your memorandum will require further discussion before they can be resolved. The Department is examining the question of extending MLRS sales to the Middle East on a priority basis. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



George P. Shultz

Office of the Secretary of Defense *S.U.S.C. 5552*
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
Date: 08 MAR 2019 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: _____
Reason: _____
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